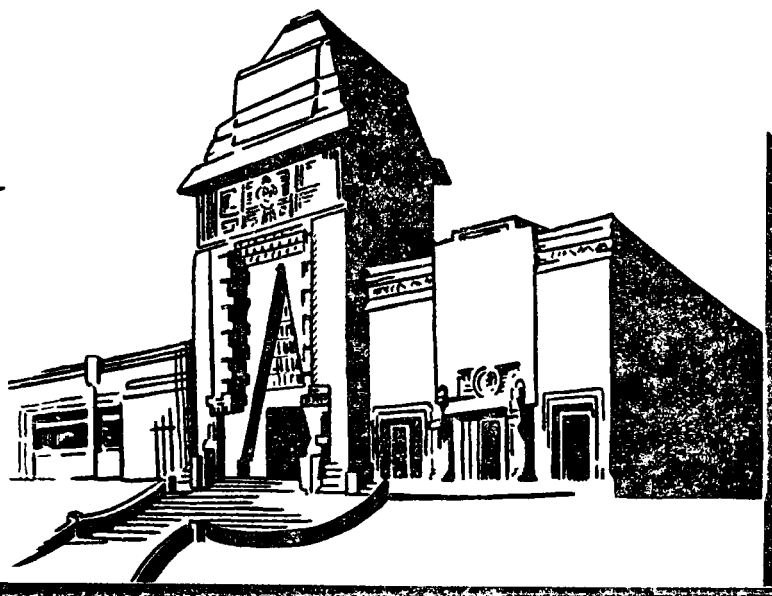


A MONTHLY LETTER

BY MANLY P. HALL



DISCIPLINES OF MEDITATION AND REALIZATION

Fourth Letter

November 1940

Dear Student:

PLACIDITY

Placidity is inner harmony, a conscious realization of the rightness of life and law. Placidity when achieved conserves energy, prevents sickness, and prepares the consciousness for esoteric disciplines.

Placidity arises from the realization of the absolute rightness of the universe as it is and the absolute justice which directs the activities of all the forces which make up the life of the universe. No one is suffering for the sins of another, no one is in a place which he has not earned for himself, no one deserves more than he has, and no one should be happy who is not. Happiness comes from within and is the result of spiritual unfoldment, and no creature which does not possess that unfoldment can be happy. There is no one in the universe who has never had a chance. There is no one who is a victim of the machinations of others. There is no one who has had more adversities than he has earned. And there is no one who can escape his just rewards.

One of the principal causes of internal stress is the thought wasted worrying for other people, trying to live their lives and save them from their just deserts. A human being can not be helped to escape from an experience necessary to him. Hence, there is very little use in trying to protect people from themselves and the experiences that they need in order to grow. This realization will contribute definitely to the placidity of thousands of people who waste their time worrying about others.

Competitive metaphysics also is detrimental to placidity. A man worrying about his soul growth or some old student fretting inwardly because he has not had visions and initiations is destroying the very environment for inward enlightenment. It is as necessary to be detached from self as from the affairs of others.

The perception of these facts in the presence of personal misfortunes affecting ourselves and those for whom we care—that is difficult. But Law is immutable and absolutely just, and the misfortunes which afflict those for whom we care are as just as the evils which afflict strangers and so-called enemies.

POISE

Poise is placidity manifested outwardly through a relaxed and ordered personality. Poise can not be cultivated successfully merely by copying the actions of others. It has been attempted but the appearance is not effective if it does not arise from an adequate inward placidity. Poise is an evidence of internal equilibrium. It is proof that the excesses of attitude have died out in the individual as the result of practicing and living the mystical life.

The value of poise lies in its relaxing effect. Any inordinate emotion or tension arising in the subjective nature will destroy poise. Poise, being destroyed, in turn reacts upon the entire organism—objective and subjective—to its detriment. This is another evidence that self-discipline not only improves the spiritual nature but is necessary to physical well-being.

Hence it should be your purpose to build so firm a foundation of integrity within yourself that the possibility of losing the inner vision that comes with poise becomes constantly less and less. In every case, you should remedy the inner causes instead of laboring with the outer manifestations. If the inside is right, the outside is bound to be right. The test of philosophy comes with the observation of how far it has been able to lift you above the pettiness of personality into the realm of universals.

INCONSISTENCY

Spiritual ideals and material faults cannot exist together in one body without ultimately destroying that body. It is not possible to gratify the destructive impulses of the animal nature and practice occult disciplines at the same time. Such inconsistency is rewarded with sickness and misery. Occult disciplines refine the body. The animal appetites render the body more coarse. Refinement and coarseness cannot abide together in the same organism without destroying the integrity of that organism. The spiritual sciences require men-

tal and emotional consistency. Hence, extremes in all things must die out with a realization of the Law *to the point of application*.

Closely related to the inconsistencies of action is the imperiousness of desire. The common belief is that the only thing that will make us happy is to receive something we have desired. Whether we have earned it does not worry us. There are many who intellectually affirm the law of cause and effect—"As ye sow so shall ye reap"—but within themselves are hopeful to the end that exceptions will be made. Students are anxious to welcome the rewards of *karma*, but still rebel against misfortunes and consider them mistakes on the part of the universe. Constantly to pray for that which is not our own and yet to say that we believe in the law of *karma*, is a hopeless contradiction that destroys the unity of our purpose.

PATIENCE

Patience is an attitude that develops with the realization that in the fullness of time the Law brings to pass that which is right. The speed at which we learn is not important. A great Brahman sage once said that the universe is so constructed that no matter how slowly we grow, we always shall have time to grow. If it takes a hundred millions of years for man to gain one idea, the universe has a hundred millions of years—and it will wait for man. Man is not pushed to accomplishment; each will have the time necessary to grow. But wise people do not take all the time there is, they start to work upon themselves with an increasing realization of the Law.

Over-estimation of self is a common cause of impatience. Man's idea of optimism is expressed in the hope that he is more highly developed than he really is and should have more of light, understanding, happiness, peace, and security than he enjoys. But there are no oversights on the part of Providence. No individual is an exile from his own reward. If man deserved one thing more than he has, he would have it. Lack is due to the individual's oversight in failing to be anything or to earn anything.

Only the highest type of mankind has the patience to perform a given task for a hundred lifetimes without deviating for a moment from the fact. It is those who possess this integrity who realize Truth.

DIRECTNESS OF ACTION

The purpose of energy is to enliven all parts of nature, to supply the very essence of achievement—life itself. Most people pay little attention to their energy allotment. They waste energy indiscriminately until it is gone and then they wonder why the universe has afflicted them. The serious studies of the metaphysician usually begins after he has reached those years when energy is not too abundant. The exuberance of youth is over, toil and responsibility have exacted their toll, and it is necessary to organize resources and conserve all life for the principal purpose of living and enlightenment.

The Taoist monk will do nothing that is not absolutely necessary. He would no more think of stalking in the hills than brawling on the street corner. He is principally concerned with conserving his energy so that he will possess it long enough to achieve enlightenment. Because of his very moderate attitudes, he enjoys good health

in his advanced years, and usually dies of old age rather than from one of the forms of suicide which exterminate the Occidentals.

Directness of action means the doing of a thing by the simplest and most direct means, living by the simplest and most direct codes, fulfilling all responsibilities in the simplest and most direct ways, and the application of principle to the various

problems of life, directly and simply, without sentiment, prejudice, or opinion. When the task is finished, one should let go—mentally and physically, returning to his composure until the next duty of life presents itself. Life is not a series of fractional circumstances each out of perspective with the rest, even though many lives appear like erratic bits of film with mental lapses between them.

For those who work in harmony with the Law, life is an inward flowing picture that moves placidly from one thing to another. There are no inter-

ruptions because there are no accidents in the universe and every incident in life is significant. Instead of living the thousand and one incidents of life, you will live one life in which the thousand and one incidents are bound together so that everything that happens is right—not because you blindly ignore that which apparently is not right, but because you will have found a more inclusive rightness that encompasses all life.



From Illustrated Actions of the Sakyamuni Buddha on Persuading All the People. Yung Shan. 1808.

The motion of Reality, here represented in dragon form, arising in the consciousness of the Buddha during meditation.

You will find that you can move through the day unmoved by anything. Events will achieve their relative importance. All experiences will become lessons that are welcomed. Everything that occurs becomes part of a well-ordered process. Things which make foolish men angry, make evident the poise of the wise. Suffering is not a matter of what happens to us, but a matter of how we take the thing that happens, becoming enriched due to inner realization.

The same realization is true of death, which to many is a great interruption to the purposes of life. But to the philosopher, life and death are parts of a greater living. Living in the presence of the inevitable, there is no place for regret, but only for balanced acceptance.

This realization will help you in your business, home, and relationships with people. Whether you go on to other metaphysical disciplines, the fact remains that you can live well only when you can extricate your consciousness from the particular mistakes you make every day. If you can find wisdom and mental integrity, if you honestly can say to yourself, "People have lost the power to hurt me; circumstances can no longer obscure convictions of principle;" then you can achieve an inner quiet. When you can stop the rising of thoughts, and have found placidity and peace, you can be still enough to feel universal life flowing through you. You can be quiet enough to hear the "Voice of the Silence." You can be inwardly so at peace and so utterly placid, that the stillness and calm of your consciousness will enable you to hear the mantras of the Law.

All of this inward consciousness is evidenced by peace in the outer nature. He who has not achieved this peace can never find God. The conquest is the non-destructive, non-aggressive attainment of realization, poise, detachment—the *Posture of the Law*.

SYMBOLS OF REALIZATION

The East Indian schools of occult philosophy give special attention to postures, mudras, and mantras. By postures is meant bodily positions

associated with forms of meditation and breathing. Postures are most numerous in the Tantric, Buddhist, and Yogic schools. Some of the body postures are exceedingly difficult to assume and require years of practice. Their principal purpose is to control the direction of energy flowing into the body from the earth, the elements, and the celestial bodies.

Mudras are hand-patterns, positions assumed by the fingers in the performance of certain symbolical rituals. The study of the mudras includes also the technic of holding, picking up, and setting down sacred instruments such as bells, wands, and the *dorge*. The mudras have reached their highest degree of perfection among the Buddhist priests of Ceylon. They also occur in Tibet where the various deified Buddhist saints and princes are represented in certain postures as they perform appropriate mudras.

The mantra is a form of chanting which occurs among nearly all religions. The virtue of the mantra lies in the sounding of certain syllables, the sounds setting up vibratory vortices. Most ancient peoples acknowledged the significance of sound, and used various mantras in the invocation of their gods and in propitiating their deified ancestors. In India the mantra is said to purify the body by its vibratory power and at the same time stimulate the chakras or nerve centers.

It must be evident to the profound metaphysical student that posture, mudra, and mantra are of symbolic rather than literal significance. This point has been emphasized by the Zen monks who insist that all physical ceremonials are symbolic of mystical processes taking place within man himself. The Greeks held a similar opinion, as did the fathers of the early Christian Church. Gradually, however, the mystical aspects of ritualism have been forgotten, and now the various ceremonies are supposed to possess intrinsic powers that are sacred in their effects.

We can not too heartily warn sincere students against the dangers of ritualistic entanglements. The modern religious world is full of formulas. While these formulas have their place and really are shadows of facts, it is presumed that the true

mystic has outgrown the necessity of participating in religious fables. Every type of formula from the "Om" formula of the Hindus to the "peace, power, and plenty" affirmation of popular psychology belong to a type of ritualism which can be very detrimental if accepted as the substance of reality.

Yet it can not be denied that there are "words of power." Nor can it be denied that certain rituals have a magical effect. But the modern metaphysician is not sufficiently informed to dabble in magic. It is unnecessary to his spiritual development, and, as the great transcendental magician Eliphas Levi himself admitted, can easily become a blind alley.

As all *mudras* and *mantras* are exceedingly dangerous for the inexperienced, being in the same class as the *chakra* development exercises and the yoga breathing exercises, we have carefully avoided such disciplines in the present course. We agree fully with the Zen teachings that they are not necessary to spiritual development and belong to the paraphernalia of cults rather than represent the essence of Truth.

POSTURE

The ancient books tell us, and so still say the most venerable of the *gurus*, that a disciple preparing to practice meditation, or any of the metaphysical disciplines, first must master the posture or body arrangement which accompanies the discipline. While the postures are positions of trained relaxation, the informed *gurus* know that these postures are only symbolical of inner conditions of consciousness. The actual position of the body is comparatively irrelevant, but the mental discipline of each posture is extremely important.

When it is said that the *sannyasin* "seats" himself, you must realize that the "seating" posture is an inner, mystical experience rather than a physical position. You must think of the mind as being disciplined instead of the body.

To "seat" oneself is to rest firmly in the Law, to establish one's consciousness rightly in the sphere of universal values. To "seat" oneself in the

Law really is to place one's realization in the eternal, never-changing, ever-real Law of life. It is the recognition of the absolute integrity of the universe, the absolute truth of Reality. When the Buddhist monk says, "I put my faith in the Law," he means that he posits his consciousness in the reality of Supreme Rightness. He has found his own center of consciousness in the realization of the rightness of things as they are. Realizing the significance of his present estate and relieved of vain hopes, he turns constructively to improvement through right action and to earning that which is necessary.

Most of the ancient teachers taught sitting down, frequently on a knoll or low hill, with their disciples gathered about them. Statues of Buddha and his *arhats* (saints) usually depict the master seated on the open petals of a lotus with his hands in the *mudra* of instruction.

Many of the scriptural books begin with such a phrase as "the master seated himself." This establishment or taking refuge in the Law signifies that the disciple has completed his searching. He no longer travels from sage to sage begging wisdom. He has become aware that Truth is within and that he no longer need search for it in place, but within himself. He has discovered peace within. He has discovered that his own being is the axis of the universe. He neither questions nor doubts the integrity of the doctrines he has followed, but is certain as to the essential principles of his philosophy. This conviction, this final acceptance of Truth and Reality is called the "establishment in ~~the Law~~."

Most modern truth seekers have wandered far afield searching for the answer to life's questions. They have knocked at many doors and have received many answers. They have been exploited and deceived. Their faith in human nature has been strained. And all for one reason—they did not know that Truth was within. To prove this, they have to search long and far. In their search they receive many answers, much knowledge, but not Truth. Like Buddha wandering from holy man to holy man, they must finally realize that the end

of all searching, of all rites and rituals, of all symbols and allegories, is the realization of indwelling reality.

To be "seated" in the Law, one, like the meditating Buddha, must be in a condition of absolute integrity. There must be absolute poise, absolute tranquillity, absolute peace. Having achieved this condition, the disciple is ready to receive further instruction. Reserving no part of himself, living with no purpose of his own, demanding nothing, he awaits the fulfillment of the Law within himself. This is the end of egotism, the final dying out of the fires of emotion and desire. This complete at-one-ment with the Law brings the only security of which man is capable. Then, truly, the disciple is "seated" in the Law.

There is a tradition that Bodhidharma crossed the China Sea on a palm leaf floating on the water. The storms raged and the waves rose, and the thunder of the sea was like the sounds of war. But a pathway of calm opened in the midst and the Buddhist patriarch wrapped in his green cloak traveled safely through the sea on his magic leaf. This legend has a significance similar to that of the account of Jesus walking on the waters.

Thus is realization symbolized. The sea is life. The sea ruffled by every wind that blows upon its surface is the mind of man, moved by every breath of emotion and opinion, and churned by the storms of the worries and terrors of the day. Yet in the midst of this stormy sea of life, the arhat walks along a pathway of calm because he is immovable in his realization of the Law. It is true, indeed, that although a thousand shall fall upon the right hand and ten thousand upon the left, the wise man shall not be moved.

Compare such an estate with the troublous life that most mortals lead. Compare the worries and fears that afflict the flesh with this peaceful detachment, this security, this absolute sufficiency. You will remember that in the story of Buddha, the young prince saw sickness and sorrow and death, and then he beheld a monk, a quiet-faced man of gentle mien who walked slowly down the dusty road unmoved and unattached, and Buddha

decided immediately that it was better to be like that man than to rule the kingdoms of the earth. Such is *establishment*; such is truly a secure foundation. Upon the open petals of the lotus, the symbol of enlightenment, sits the sage sustained by his own realization, immovable, "seated" in the Law.

BECOMING IMMOVABLE

Becoming immovable in the Law does not mean a rigor of the body, but is symbolic of a fundamental integrity of purpose. The disciple must accept some system of discipline and stay with it. He must set himself so securely with a one-pointed purpose that neither the element of time nor any material interruption can shift him from his purpose.

We must realize that our approach to the Real is in the integrity of ourselves. The neophyte, before entering meditation, closes the circuits of himself. Therefore, in the old books showing the pictures of meditating philosophers, we find the body formed into a figure "8" by the crossing of the hands and feet. There are two reasons for this. The first is to close out contrary vibratory forces. The second is to prevent the scattering of vibratory forces.

By shutting off all undesirable forces is meant that the individual by realization causes levels of action, thoughts, and emotions which are lower than himself, to die out of his own consciousness. By excluding outside evils is to be understood the exclusion of the inferiority of personality. "Outside" in the metaphysical sense does not always mean the external environment as much as the body which is outside of Self. The cutting off of outside things means the conscious lifting of the mind to a level where mental and emotional factors die out. Achieving the higher level, the disciple is no longer troubled with the interferences of consciousness, at least during the period of meditation.

The "closing in" of vital forces means that the individual shall in all things conserve himself, for none can achieve a high degree of spiritual ac-

complishment who scatters his resources. We must remember that meditation and realization use for their fulfillment the same energy that is used for all the occupations and concerns of life.

The problem of conserving and reserving energy, of not wasting it through any thought or action, is an important one. Not one ounce of vitality which is necessary for the extension of the mind should be wasted. Therefore, in the holding of the hands and feet in a certain position we have the symbol of this preservation of energy.

Unselfishness of purpose is signified by the lifting up of the body from the earth so that the currents of the earth will not rise through the spinal base. This yoga practice means dissociation of purpose by mental energy, because that which belongs to the inner life must not be debased or perverted by being involved in material accomplishment. It must be separate from all irrational extremes.

DISCIPLINE

We have laid the foundation for the general practice of discipline. We have indicated at least a group of special ways in which, through a better standard of thinking and a higher level of understanding, we can improve the whole life. That general improvement is vital to the achievement of any specific results.

Specific exercises are prepared for individual purposes. The problem that has confronted us has been the devising of a series of exercises of gradually unfolding disciplines which would be safe to give to a large number of people. All Yoga, Tantric, and Buddhistic disciplines are individual in application. It is impossible to give one Yoga discipline that will be helpful to five people in the same group. It will be harmful to four of the five, if not actually fatal.

Everyone needs some form of metaphysical discipline, and yet circumstances make it impossible for anyone to examine individually into the needs of all people. The problem is clarified by the application of the Law itself, namely: While

all things are different and separate, finally all things are one, having a common nature as their cause. Or, as Plato says, "All specifics are suspended from generals."

We believe we have devised a system which can produce only good, and which will protect itself in several ways. It will protect itself against those who cannot use it to gain results in a brief time. The individual who has not the integrity to use it will not have the patience to follow it.

In the simple system which we have developed, no elaborate posture is necessary. It is not so important how the individual sits or holds his hands, as that it should conform with discipline. The individual should not be entirely comfortable, nor should there be an absolute lack of comfort. Absolute comfort generally leads to sleep in occult disciplines because the individual is working with faculties little used, and his first impulse is to go to sleep. No exercise should be performed in bed.

In this modern world there is nothing man is more subject to than interruptions. There are people who have marvelous poise until they are interrupted in one of their exercises. Then they are not slow in expressing their irritation.

In meditation, be prepared to meet interruption happily. An individual who is irritated by interruptions is too sensitive in a negative sense to achieve positive results. No matter how many interruptions occur, a wise person cannot be interrupted due to the fact that he is ready at all times to get up and do the necessary thing. With complete poise and inward peace, the individual can pass through the numerous vicissitudes that upset most people, without any sense of interruption.

In the beginning, the efforts of the disciple are in a feeble state, and it is better that he have a quiet place for meditation, protected from unnecessary interruption. There is no advantage in increasing the hazards in the infant stages of development. But in a more advanced state, the student will be taken out of the secret place and put on the street corner. The purpose is not to overcome peace, but discord. To overcome the discord in living, the individual in meditation should be able

to put the most unpleasant sounds in their proper places in the universal harmony.

The wise man can not be interrupted, nor will he hear discord in the atmosphere around him. He may be meditating between a trolley-car and a train, but the noise of both of them do not interrupt him.

The next thing to consider is the chair, or whatever type of seat is going to be used. The exercise should be taken, preferably, sitting up in a straight but comfortable chair. The chair should not permit you to collapse in it like some overstuffed, easy chair, but on the other hand it should not be a boney, unpleasant thing. As man must balance himself between the comforts and discomforts of life, so he should choose as a symbol of his life, something moderately comfortable, something that makes him sit up. A chair that holds out its arms embracingly to you is too much like false doctrines.

It is important that this one seat or chair always be used for the first six months. After that it should intentionally be discarded, because not only must we be able to accomplish meditation anywhere, but under any condition. The meditation exercises must not be coddled. On the other hand, they should not be made unnecessarily difficult until the disciple have some degree of strength. Like the small child, the neophyte must learn to crawl before he can walk.

Regularity of discipline is most important. Choose some hour that is the common denominator of the quiet hours of the day, either before you have begun your business for the day, or after you have finished your activities. Choose some time not likely to be changed. If necessary, choose some unusual hour, although if it is so unusual it is on your mind all the time, you will probably not forget it during meditation. But see to it that you do not have more than one interruption a week—at least six days out of seven, keep your appointment with yourself.

After you have chosen the seat and the time, and have prepared a suitable environment within yourself, then you must bear in mind that you begin in peace and end in the turmoil of life. You

begin by yourself, but in the end you must learn to meditate among all men. You begin in comfort, but gradually you must learn to meditate amidst discomfort. You train yourself in order and rhythm so that you can do that for a few seconds which sometime you will be able to do at all times and any time. You will be taking a few feeble steps to something that will gradually absorb your life and give it great richness.

REALIZATION

Your realization for this lesson shall be: *Listen for the Law*. Ponder well the meaning of the words. Seek to discover that which cannot be written, but must be experienced.

As the singing lohans (Buddhist arhats) sang the Law in the Diamond Mountains of Korea, so the modern disciple must listen to the *Song of Truth* that is forever flowing through the worlds.

To hear the Law, one must become silent, truly silent. Outer sound must be silenced. The inner ear must hear the *Chant of Space*.

Let the mind be still; let the desires be silent; let the body be relaxed; let all the senses and impulses be hushed—and thus *listen*. In moments of stress, when problems threaten, when all life seems out of key—*listen*.

If you have achieved the proper posture (mood), if you have placed yourself in the Law, you will hear. In the words of an Eastern poet: "The Law will come to you like the murmur of a summer breeze at eventide. You will hear it like the sound of a soft breath flowing among the fronds of a palm tree." It is thus that you should understand the true meaning of the biblical words that in the cool of the evening, the Lord (Law) walked in the garden.

In the midst of your living and in the midst of the problems of your living—*Listen for the Law*.

Sincerely yours,

